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ABSTRACT

An examination of translation and conference interpretation as well-established academic professions focuses on how they should be taught in order to maintain the integrity of the two professions and the highest standards in their exercise. An introductory section answers the question, "Can translation and interpretation be taught?," noting that these professionals must possess an extraordinary array of qualifications, including flawless mastery of their working languages, including their native one. A second chapter outlines the basic qualifications and aptitudes for succeeding in the profession as well as the characteristics of those who should not try to enter it. A chapter on learning and teaching resources discusses textbooks, dictionaries, periodicals, text materials, and needed equipment (booths and consoles). The structure, duration, and sequence of translation and interpretation curricula, specific instructional methods for the different kinds of work, and testing issues are discussed in separate chapters, and two concluding sections look at career options and job opportunities and issues in professional ethics. In the latter section, the translator's and interpreter's responsibilities are detailed. A concluding chapter contains some advice to prospective students in the field, and a bibliography is appended. (MSE)

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TRAINING TRANSLATORS AND CONFERENCE INTERPRETERS

Wilhelm K. Weber

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Prepared by ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics

LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION: Theory and Practice No. 58

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FOREWORD

Many learned books have been published about the "sciences" of translation and interpretation. This book is somewhat less pretentious. It deals neither with linguistics, nor with psycholinguistics, nor with the importance of translation and interpretation in the communicative process.

It deals rather with the importance of translation and conference interpretation as well-established academic professions and how they should be taught in order to maintain the integrity of the two professions and the highest standards in their exercise.

It is an attempt to show, on the basis of my twenty years of experience in the practice and teaching of both fields, what the professional translator and interpreter must know, and what can be done--and cannot be done--to help many young people interested in these careers achieve this goal.

It is an attempt, however modest, to inspire respect for these very difficult and exacting, yet highly satisfying, professions, without which today's world of international interdependence could not function.

Those who prepare students for careers in translation and interpretation must have the highest regard for the skills that they are trying to impart to future members of the profession. Indeed, it would be inconceivable for anyone to try and teach these skills as merely ancillary to learning foreign languages.

These skills--or arts, if you will--have become part of two distinct, although related,

professions that provide thousands of practitioners around the world with their livelihood and endless personal satisfaction.

Both professions must be taught only by the best-qualified instructors to those students who demonstrate clearly that they, too, possess the necessary aptitudes and maturity to enable them to become outstanding professionals.

I encourage all the many dedicated teachers of translation and interpretation around the world to pursue their efforts toward shaping this excellent talent and bringing it to its full fruition in the exercise of these two professions that help people to understand one another across many barriers.

Carmel, Spring 1984

CHAPTER 1: CAN TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION BE TAUGHT?

Although the profession of interpreting is as old as man's ability to speak, and although the first translators performed their art when the first diplomatic notes and trade papers were exchanged, it is only since the end of World War I and the international crises that followed that these two professions have developed in their present form. Consecutive interpretation[1] was used exclusively until about 1945, when simultaneous interpretation was used for the first time at the war criminal trials at Nuremberg.

Good translators and good interpreters must possess an extraordinary array of qualifications. Just as an outstanding instrumental soloist or a perfect figure skater must have a flawless technique, translators and interpreters must have a complete mastery of their working languages, *including their native language*.

In order to answer the question asked in the chapter heading, I must first say something about the way in which people currently become translators and interpreters.

Whereas one can still enter the field of translation with every imaginable background (and, in fact, all too often without the proper

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[1]Although I address myself only to the profession of conference interpreters, I feel that all other interpreters--and in particular, court interpreters --should benefit from the same training.

background at all), the access to the profession of conference interpretation is much more structured.

The most recent statistical survey of the International Association of Conference Interpreters shows that 95 percent of the respondents between the ages of 30 and 45 were trained in a university program. There is a good reason for these statistics: one can be a poor translator for a long time before complaints arise, whereas a faulty interpretation is caught immediately, most of the time to the utmost embarrassment of all concerned. Moreover, the fact that interpreters work in teams assures a certain quality control, for nothing is more painful for a conference interpreter than to work with a colleague who is doing a poor job.

There are two important points to consider when attempting to answer the question whether translation and interpretation can be taught:

(1) The first interpreters in our century were all self-taught. They were full-fledged diplomats, whose training and whose professional experience endowed them with extraordinary linguistic and communicative skills. They developed their skills on the basis of an unusually broad general knowledge, education, and perfect fluency in several languages.

(2) It is sometimes said by members of our profession that "so-and-so would have made it even without a school" or that she or he "became a good translator/interpreter *in spite* of the school she or he attended." Although remarks of this nature are heard less often nowadays and are based on a time when students were taught by the "sink-or-swim" method, the implication remains that teaching is not everything and--more important--not all the skills can be taught to everyone.

It will come as no surprise to the reader that I am of the opinion that translation and interpretation *must* be taught, and taught properly.

Only exceptionally gifted people (of whom I have only met one or two during my professional career) can hope to accede to these professions on their own without developing serious bad habits and making mistakes that will tarnish their professional performance for the rest of their careers.

CHAPTER 2: BASIC APTITUDES AND QUALIFICATIONS

Before I attempt to describe the "magic" aptitudes that a successful translator or interpreter must possess, a definition of both fields seems in order. This should also automatically clarify who should NOT try to enter these professions.

Translation is the transposition of a text written in a source language into a target language. The translated version must be absolutely accurate in meaning, contain all nuances of the original, and must be written in clear, elegant language that can be easily understood by the reader. Needless to say, punctuation, spelling, and grammar must be flawless. In addition, translators have at their disposal dictionaries and reference material in both languages.

Interpretation is the oral transposition of an orally delivered message at a conference or a meeting from a source language into a target language, performed in the presence of the participants. This function can be performed simultaneously (at the same time as the speech is given) or consecutively (after the speaker has finished a part or the totality of the speech). At times, the interpreter has to go from the written medium (text) to the oral medium (interpretation). This is called sight translation.

The important distinction is that the product of the translator is meant to be read, whereas that of the interpreter is meant to be listened to.

It immediately becomes apparent from these definitions that translators have to be able to hold their own with the authors of the texts that

they are asked to translate, and that interpreters need to be intellectually equal to the speakers whom they have to interpret.

This absolutely rules out any attempt to train these professionals at any level but the graduate level. This is particularly true for interpreters. No participant in any important meeting would trust a twenty-year-old to catch all the important details in a speech.

TRANSLATION

Aptitudes for Students

Scholastic transcripts can be very helpful in determining a student's aptitude for translation. Good grades in advanced composition and essay writing are a particularly good indication of aptitude. One might justifiably ask why a translator needs all these exceptional qualities to produce a translation of a highly technical nature. My answer to this question is that writing and stylistic exercises are exercises in intellectual self-discipline and flexibility--two extremely important aptitudes in a translator.

Although they never express their own ideas in their work, future translators must be exceptionally creative in their native language in order to be able to convey the message contained in the original text in the most accurate and understandable, yet elegant, way possible.

It would be fair to say that only students who receive straight A's in their native language courses can aspire to the degree of perfection needed by a translator.

As professional translators are very rarely experts in the subject matter of the text they are asked to translate, the ability to absorb new ideas and processes and then explain them in the target language is of the utmost importance.

Translators must also be able to convey complicated ideas accurately. Good training in their own language, which should *always* be the language

into which they translate, is an absolute prerequisite. Technical writing courses as well as classes in editing and proofreading will be of great help to the future translator.

Although technical experts who also translate will initially have a distinct advantage over general translators, who need training to become technical translators, the former will remain translators in their own field of expertise only, whereas the latter will be able to deal with any material that ends up on their desk. Moreover, most technical experts rarely possess outstanding writing skills.

Experience has shown that graduates in translation can easily be trained to become technical translators. Many of them finish their careers in corporate managerial positions, which underscores their extraordinary flexibility.

Finally, it is often argued that it is better to have a technical background for technical translation; however, there are not many engineers or technicians who would be interested in doing full-time translations as long as language personnel in the corporate world continue to receive the low salaries that they are paid today.

Aptitudes for Instructors

Teachers of translation must possess the same basic aptitudes as the students. This statement might seem like a truism, but it must be made nonetheless, as there are far too many instructors of translation who (1) have never had one of their own translations evaluated by a professional or (2) have never even produced a translation of any significance.

Translation is no accurate science that can be acquired in one step. It has to be practiced daily in order to improve one's skills and to build up the kind of experience that is needed to teach the field. Each translation adds to one's preparedness to deal with the next one.

It is naive to believe that a knowledge of a language and literature, not to mention a familiarity with linguistics, qualifies one to teach translation. Only the very experienced translator can instruct students how to avoid pitfalls and how to transpose a message written in one language to the genius of another language in such a way that readers of the translation are led to believe that they are actually reading a text drafted in their own language.

INTERPRETATION

Aptitudes for Students

As mentioned earlier, conference interpreters have to have the same level of intelligence as the person they are called upon to interpret. This does not imply, however, that all people possessing a high degree of intelligence and language fluency can become conference interpreters. What, then, are the aptitudes that distinguish the student with good potential from all others?

Perhaps this is the appropriate time to consider *aptitude tests* for future conference interpreters. I have administered aptitude tests at the University of Geneva, Switzerland; the United Nations European Office; NATO; the European Communities; and Georgetown University. Although the tests used by these different institutions vary in their modalities of application and specific content, all attempt to test the following:

- Intelligence
- Ability to abstract and paraphrase
- Reaction time
- Memory
- Poise and presentation
- Voice
- Understanding of and fluency in the foreign languages

- Quality of the native language

These aptitudes are normally tested in the following manner:

(1) Candidates are asked to talk in their foreign languages about their studies, living experiences abroad, and general intellectual interests. This test gives a fairly good picture of the candidates' way of thinking and of presenting their own ideas. The evaluation criteria are voice, presentation, accent, logical sequence of ideas, general attitude, and general knowledge.

(2) The second part often consists of an exercise in abstracting and paraphrasing. A short exposé, comprising a section with dense information and one that is rather wordy but does not contain many concrete ideas, is either read or improvised in one of the students' foreign languages by one of the examiners (there are usually two).

The candidates are then asked to repeat orally in their native language as much information as they have been able to retain. The exposé is usually no longer than three or four minutes. Candidates are discouraged from taking any notes (with the exception of numbers and proper names), as this is also a memory test.

The evaluation criteria are completeness and accuracy (retention), understanding of the foreign language, logic of presentation, ability to abstract and retain key ideas, concentration, and ability to deal with such translation difficulties as humor, idiomatic expressions, or proverbs.

(3) The third and last part usually consists of a sight translation from both foreign languages into the native language. The emphasis here is on the understanding and rendering of a somewhat higher language level. Evaluated are speed, accuracy, and technique of dealing with unexpected difficulties (it is important that candidates be given absolutely no time to look at the text beforehand).

Most tests in consecutive interpretation are conducted with improvised exposés, including witty and humorous ones, which are particularly suited

for testing the general interpreting skills of candidates. Incidentally, these tests are never terminology tests, but general skills tests.

This kind of aptitude test has cut down the failure rate at final exams or successive tests during the training period to quite acceptable proportions. Students who do not exhibit the requisite aptitudes are either not allowed to enter the program or are encouraged to improve their language skills before taking the test a second time. Usually, they can take these tests only twice.

Aptitudes for Instructors

The qualities of good instructors of interpretation will be discussed in greater detail in the chapter on teaching methods. However, it can be said at this point quite emphatically that interpretation should be taught only by professional interpreters. As in the case of translators, someone who does not have the skills and aptitudes to interpret cannot teach interpretation effectively. Moreover, instructors have to keep up these skills through constant practice and must keep abreast of professional developments and innovations or changes.

It is quite inconceivable for anyone to teach interpretation without being able to demonstrate the skills, just as it would be unimaginable for a choreographer to teach dance without having experienced all the movements. It would be professionally and morally dishonest to students to try and communicate to them the extremely difficult art of interpretation without having been *extensively* exposed to the practice.

While translation can sometimes be integrated into the mainstream of programs for language majors as an additional means for acquiring and perfecting language skills--*but not to prepare professional translators*, except in the literary field--interpretation needs its own well structured curriculum composed of many complex elements.

The occasional "exercises in consecutive or simultaneous interpretation" for language majors, of which we see too many at present, are, in my opinion, complete nonsense. They are useless at best, and counterproductive and unethical at worst. The attempt to increase the enrollment in foreign language classes by offering courses in pseudo-interpretation is a sin against the whole profession!

CHAPTER 3: LEARNING AND TEACHING RESOURCES

In this chapter, I am assuming that the translation and interpretation program is offered at a university and that students have access to a well-endowed reference library in all fields that they need to investigate within the framework of their studies. I shall therefore concentrate on only those resources that are needed specifically to teach and study translation and interpretation.

TEXTBOOKS

It is always surprising to people wanting to add a translation and interpretation component to their language instruction that there are very few --if any--textbooks in these fields. The reason for this state of affairs is that instruction is based primarily on personal professional experience and that teaching methods are constantly being improved and adjusted on the basis of this ongoing experience. Moreover, conference interpreters who also teach are normally too busy to write about their experiences. (For some general introductory books on the two professions, please refer to the bibliography at the end of this publication.)

DICTIONARIES

It is always a good idea to encourage students to work with monolingual reference dictionaries rather than to adopt the easy solution of looking up words directly in bilingual or multilingual dictionaries. The process of looking for synonyms of the unknown word in the source language first and then trying to find the equivalent in the target language develops a great deal of sensitivity and accuracy in both languages. Even for technical terminology, students should be discouraged from taking the easy shortcut of referring directly to the bilingual or multilingual technical dictionary. This procedure only encourages students to compare word pairs before even understanding the exact meaning of the source word.

This is not to say, of course, that one can do without bilingual dictionaries, which are often more carefully prepared than multilingual dictionaries.

The best dictionaries in any technical field, in my opinion, are those that are compiled by professional organizations. These are at times difficult to come by, but it certainly pays to try and find them.

The choice of technical fields and specialties to be covered by a program's library largely depends on the topics covered in the classes. In this day and age, however, they should include *at least* all the following:

- Medicine (general)
- Medical specialties, e.g., Neurology
  Dermatology
  Urology
  Gynecology and obstetrics
  Surgery
  Ophthalmology
  Otolaryngology
  Dentistry
  Orthopedics

- Biology
- Chemistry
- Petrochemistry
- Pharmacology and pharmaceutics
- Computer science
- Pollution control
- Iron and steel industry
- Armaments
- Nuclear energy

In the more general fields, the following should be accessible to students:

- International organizations
- Politics and world affairs
- Economics
- Currencies
- Finance and banking
- Statistics
- Budgeting and accounting
- International and trade negotiations
- Development and technical assistance
- International law and comparative law

All these topics should be dealt with at least once during the students' training period. In addition to translation and interpretation exercises, courses should include a general introduction to these fields. Therefore, general reference material in these areas must be available in all languages that are offered in the program. A good translation and interpretation library should not only help students during their studies but should also provide assistance to them for their work after graduation.

PERIODICALS AND NEWSPAPERS

The program must subscribe to at least one daily newspaper in each language offered as well as the most important and most widely read weekly publications. For languages that are spoken in several

countries, subscriptions should cover several--if not all--of these countries in order to allow students to compare styles, points of view, and regional idiosyncracies.

Moreover, at least one scientific and technical magazine in each language must be available.

TEXT MATERIALS

For Translation

The best text materials are those that have been translated by instructors themselves. However, very few professional translators are familiar with all the fields that must be included in translation courses, unless they have retired from a long professional career (in which case some of the materials might be outdated).

Several sources can be tapped for translation texts:

- International organizations
  The specialized agencies of the United Nations should not be forgotten. Some of these, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency, the World Health Organization, the International Telecommunications Union, the Universal Postal Union, etc., deal with highly technical fields. Many of them distribute publications at little or no cost. The public information offices of these organizations are normally helpful in locating such materials.

- Tests used for testing new translators by international organizations, translation agencies, government agencies, and private corporations

- Newspapers

- Technical publications
- Publications and reports of banks and financial institutions
  Some of these are published in several languages and provide ideal material.
- Legal publications and documents
- Contract forms

When choosing the text material, instructors should take care that students are exposed to the terminology and the jargon that are commonly used by experts in the different fields. Using the correct "style of the trade" will make the difference between a translation that reads like a translation and a rendition that could have been written by an expert in the target language. Obviously, all translation materials must be regularly updated.

It should be stressed that in order to assimilate the particular style, students must read *in their own language* material on the topic dealt with in the translation assignment, even *before starting the translation*. There is a German expression for this process, which is "sich einlesen" (literally, "to read oneself into").

Although the material described above should form the core of the courses, there is, of course, more general material that poses particular problems of structure and syntax in the source language and that remains timeless.

For Interpretation

All course material for interpretation courses *must* consist of speeches. Absolutely no articles should be used, as they are meant to be read and not listened to. The information contained therein is often too dense to be interpreted, even by the most experienced professionals, and would only discourage students. Ideally, the instructor should

improvise these speeches, both in consecutive and simultaneous interpretation courses.

However, as most technical papers read in scientific conferences and conventions are prepared in writing, an extensive collection of these should be on hand in a training program for more advanced students. Such materials can only be used by particularly experienced instructors who are able to rearrange the content of these articles and come up with what sounds like a spontaneous speech.

The same material can be used for both simultaneous and consecutive classes, although the texts used for consecutive classes are usually more demanding, since students have more time to think and to analyze the original.

Recordings of good *as well as unsatisfactory* interpretations serve as excellent tools for demonstrating to students the quality--and the problems--of professionals. Practical demonstrations by the instructor should, of course, be given regularly. In addition to their pedagogical value, they also increase the respect and confidence that the students feel toward their instructor.

MATERIALS FOR INTERPRETATION

Booths and Consoles

Good simultaneous interpretation equipment is extremely important if students are to be prepared for the realities of their profession. I do *not* recommend the use of language lab facilities for the following reasons:

(1) The lack of soundproofing (open booths or "stations") induces students to whisper, or, at best, to reduce their voice volume unnaturally. This leads to additional stress in an already stressful environment.

(2) As conference interpreters always work in teams of at least two interpreters per booth, it is

important that students learn how to cooperate efficiently with their colleagues.

(3) Students have to get used to the kind of equipment that is used in international conferences in order to develop the correct reflexes in operating microphone switches, channel selectors ("In" and "Out"), volume controls, cough buttons, etc. Moreover, maintaining the correct distance from the microphone and choosing voice modulation that best suits the listener, the equipment, and themselves are of extreme importance.

Ideally, a large classroom or auditorium should be equipped with eight to ten regular-sized booths. To allow for the organization of mock conferences, the same room should also contain a conference table large enough to seat a dozen people.

If an auditorium is available, it should be outfitted with booths, so that students can practice whenever guest speakers are lecturing. In some cases it might be possible to provide an audio link between the auditorium and the classroom for simultaneous interpretation, so that the number of students who can practice with a "live" lecturer can be increased.

However, it must be pointed out that interpretation without a direct visual link with the speaker should be limited to exceptional cases. The visual link is a basic element of the communicative process among the speaker, the interpreter, and the listeners and should not be eliminated.

The classroom should have a separate console for the instructor, allowing for the following operations:

- Listening to each booth individually
- Listening simultaneously to the original speech on tape or cassette *and* one student (student in one ear, speech in the other ear)
- Reading a speech in the original language while at the same time listening to one booth

- Listening simultaneously to a speech given at the conference table and to one student
- Playing for all booths a speech recorded on tape or cassette
- Recording each booth individually and at the same time, i.e., there must be as many recorders as there are booths
- Playing back the original speech
- Playing back each student's recorded interpretation with feedback into room (loudspeakers) and booths (through system)
- Operating a call system to all booths
- Operating an individual intercom with each booth, enabling the instructor to give corrections during the student's interpretation

Recordings of Speeches

A comprehensive collection of recordings of actual speeches of varying difficulty and speed is indispensable. Conditions that correspond to those actually encountered in multilingual meetings can be recreated only with difficulty in the classroom, and even an experienced instructor sometimes finds it difficult to maintain normal speed while reading a speech out loud and listening to the simultaneous interpretation at the same time.

A number of experiments have been conducted with the use of videotaped speeches. The prevailing opinion among teachers of interpretation is that a real situation cannot be recreated with videotapes and that looking at an image on a screen does not really replace looking directly at a speaker. It is therefore not really worthwhile for

a school to invest in this type of equipment, unless a large screen can be used, allowing a full view of the speaker or at least his or her entire face and all gestures.

Professional interpreters always demand to see the speaker directly and refuse to work unless this condition is met. This excludes the use of television monitors, unless these are used as supplements (for instance, in very large meeting halls where the interpreters' booths are far away from the speakers' podium).

CHAPTER 4: CURRICULUM

Only full training programs should be offered in translation and interpretation. Isolated courses are only counterproductive, as they lull the students into the false impression of having mastered the profession. At best, the more gifted students feel frustrated, because they cannot pursue their studies any further. At worst, students will try to advertise their "skills" after only one or two courses and find out that they are totally unprepared for reality. Ideally, there should be two completely separate curricula for each field. This also depends, however, on the age, intellectual maturity, and language background of the students.

Again, a strong warning seems in order at this point: the training of professional translators and interpreters is a "package" that needs to be carefully balanced. Just as no one in his right mind would think of offering one or two courses in "The Practice of Medicine," no one should attempt piecemeal training of translators or interpreters.

In Europe, students usually start their translation and interpretation studies as soon as they finish high school; it is at this point that they enter the university. This implies that the European curricula must include extensive general studies as well as language studies.

On the basis of my experience with approximately five hundred graduate students, I feel that in the United States the ideal program would consist of two preparatory years at the upper-division undergraduate level, followed by two years of intensive graduate work.

DEGREES

The degree per se is actually less important than the assurance that the graduate will be able to perform satisfactorily in his or her profession. However, two factors have to be taken into consideration:

(1) The status of the two professions is largely dependent upon the university degrees held by its members. Translating and conference interpreting are fully recognized as academic professions, both by the United Nations family of organizations, where they are classified in the professional category, i.e., requiring a university degree (usually Professional Category 2 or 3 as beginners), as well as by government agencies all over the world. Anything less than a graduate degree would jeopardize the status of both professions.

Let me add a remark about so-called "Certificates" at this point: certificates create the false impression that their holders are officially certified. This makes potential clients believe that they are dealing with particularly capable individuals. Although many certificate holders are, in fact, well qualified, this is not always the case. In addition, certificate programs are normally much shorter than full degree programs.

Only court interpreters are certified by federal or state governments; this certification is for interpreting in the courtroom only, and not for any other work that might be performed outside. The titles "translator" and "interpreter" have no legal status--except in Austria and the Federal Republic of Germany, which are, to my knowledge, the only countries that offer this protection.

(2) Many graduates in translation or interpretation may want to switch to other activities at a later time. The experience and knowledge they have accumulated during their professional activities enable many of them to take on managerial positions in private industry, open their own businesses, or go back into the academic world. This they can do

far more easily if they hold a full-fledged academic degree. Teaching positions in accredited translation and interpretation programs, of course, also require university degrees.

DURATION

Program duration may vary slightly from one country to another, but regardless of the degree, the duration of studies should be at least four years in addition to the European baccalaureate or its equivalent, i.e., after completion of the lower-division undergraduate studies in the U.S. In a normal university setting--excluding intensive crash courses for exceptionally gifted adults--this means a minimum of 60 semester (or 90 quarter) units of credit. The length of studies needed by any individual student over and above the minimum requirement will also vary, depending on the student's general background and language knowledge. It is highly counterproductive for students and instructors alike to attempt to accelerate the training period, except as noted above.

At the Monterey Institute of International Studies, where we run a two-year graduate program, it has been our experience that with the exception of a few extremely gifted students, the most successful are those who can afford to take a full year off between their first and second year in residence to live in the countries where their foreign languages are spoken.

Students in the U.S. usually know their first foreign language quite well, but have serious deficiencies in their second foreign language, which they cannot correct during their studies. We usually advise these students either to take some time off to fill these gaps or to concentrate on their stronger language, graduate in this language, and then add on other foreign languages at a later time.

It is, in fact, not uncommon for both translators and interpreters to add more languages to their professional repertoire in the course of their careers. Once the basic skills are acquired, they are more easily transferrable to new languages.

On the other hand, gaps in general and linguistic education are best filled during the years of study. Starting out in the profession with too little preparation not only can result in a bad reputation (which spreads rapidly in a small profession), but also chances are that because of time constraints, this gap can never be closed.

I do not wish by any means to imply, of course, that one learns nothing during one's professional career. On the contrary, our two professions offer unique opportunities for self-improvement. This is one of the attributes that makes them so enormously rewarding. However, in order to be able to benefit to the fullest from this learning process, students must be fully prepared when they start their professional careers.

SEQUENCE

As in all teaching endeavors, it is important never to make too many demands on the good will, the patience, and the abilities of the students. This implies that the curriculum as a whole, and the course contents in particular, must be carefully sequenced. This is all the more important in translation and interpretation, as we are dealing with skills that have to be developed gradually, and not with subject matter that can simply be mastered through diligence or rote learning.

Translation

It is always a good idea to start translation with some contrastive analysis, in order to make students aware from the outset of the typical pitfalls of translation. This will teach them to read the source texts with a professional eye. At the same time, their faculty for analysis will be sharpened. They learn how to retain the main ideas instead of the original words, or--better yet--they learn how to strip the ideas of all cumbersome linguistic forms before attempting to express these same ideas as a native of the target language would. To this end, exercises in paraphrasing and substituting--first in the source language alone and then in both languages--have proven to be very helpful. These exercises can be done either in writing or orally, as, for example, in a public speaking course.

At this point, I would like to include an aside on the question of whether training in translation is a necessary first step for future conference interpreters.

The answer to this often-debated question very much depends on the quality of the students. Immediately exposing to interpretation students who still need much work in their languages, *including their native language*, would be somewhat like asking a rider to jump over high fences before he or she has acquired a good seat. Moreover, there is a danger in interpretation that students may become careless in style and syntax, if not in grammar. Therefore, interpretation should not even be attempted before the students have acquired a "safe linguistic seat," especially in their native language.

But let us come back now to the future translator.

Exercises in avoiding translations that read like translations will normally take up most of the first year of training. It is always a good idea during this initial period to expose the students to many different possible translations and to show

them the work of professional translators--even bad examples.

During the second year, more complicated translation problems should be solved, calling for inventiveness and resourcefulness on the part of the instructors as well as the students.

Assuming that the purpose of the training is to produce professional translators who can earn a living with these skills, my observations on *literary translation* can be summed up in a single remark: literary translation is a luxury in a professional program. What the professional translator needs is a profound knowledge of source and target languages in as many fields as possible. I am not against literary translation as such; on the contrary, literary translation can lead to extraordinary insights into the complex structure and the beauty of a language as well as into the genius of the people who speak it. Students should, therefore, always be strongly encouraged to read good literature *and* literary translations in order to improve their abilities.

The student's masterpiece should be his or her *thesis*. The thesis should be done by the student alone, but should be closely supervised by the advisor. It should be read by two readers, one of whom does not know the source language at all. The other reader, when applicable, should be a technical expert. The thesis project should be at least 100 pages long (about 30,000 words).

The thesis also offers a marvelous opportunity to introduce the student to the professional world: the preparation of a printable translation, typing and typesetting, corrections and proofreading, footnotes, translator's notes, research, quotes, correspondence with authors and publishers, translation rights, copyright, contracts, etc. Many of these aspects of the profession should also be covered in a *special course on the profession*, which should include professional ethics, professional associations, responsibilities, fees, and negotiations with clients.

Three courses should be mandatory for both translators and interpreters:

- Sight Translation
- Precis Writing
- Conference Terminology and Parliamentary Procedure

Sight translation is the process through which every translator must go before putting anything on paper. Moreover, it is really what translators do if they dictate their translations. And, finally, translators are normally called upon to do sight translations in meetings and negotiations, because interpreters are not available to do this job.

Likewise, all *precis writing* is done by translators. This fulfills a very important function in larger international organizations, where minutes are not published *in extenso*, but rather in the form of a "Summary Record." Writing these requires a special technique that translators must master.

Interpretation

Courses in interpretation should adhere strictly to the following sequence:

- Sight translation
- Consecutive interpretation
- Simultaneous interpretation

The most difficult aspect of interpreting is the speed with which it must be accomplished. Therefore, students have to be led gradually to a point where they are able to cope with this problem.

Through *sight translation*, students learn how to conduct themselves in front of an audience. They also acquire the basic reflexes required to transpose a message into another language (assuming that they have not had any translation courses beforehand). Moreover, they develop a swift eye-brain-voice coordination, which becomes vital in the process of simultaneous interpretation of speeches that have been prepared beforehand and are read at top speed by the speaker. Finally, it

is a little easier to analyze a message that is presented visually than one that is presented orally.

During the next phase, *consecutive interpretation*, students learn how to analyze a message that is presented to them orally at increasing speed, to strip this message of all superfluous linguistic forms, and then to express it in their target language in the same way as a native speaker of that language would have presented this message spontaneously. (At this stage, students control their own timing, at least during the actual interpretation.)

The *simultaneous interpretation* course crowns this whole process. The students have learned through sight translation and consecutive interpretation how to go about the basic steps of the whole interpretation process and will now find it easier to cope with the extraordinary stress of the simultaneous process, where they must depend totally on the speed at which the speech is given.

It can easily be seen why offering simultaneous interpretation courses in an isolated fashion or at the beginning of the program simply does not make sense. The omission of the preparatory work only produces parrots who repeat words at high speed, without making any effort to analyze and transpose the original message. The result is that the listeners are buried under an avalanche of words that they in turn have to analyze in order to understand. Under such circumstances, the interpreter is obviously not fulfilling his or her basic mission, which is to help people communicate. The message coming out of an interpreter's booth must be absolutely clear. The listener should not have to make any special effort in addition to listening, which sometimes is enough of an effort to begin with, as it is unnatural for anyone to wear earphones all day.

CHAPTER 5: INSTRUCTION

METHODS

Translation

Translation classes must be made interesting. Although this is, of course, true of all classes in all subjects, a translation class runs a greater risk of becoming boring because of its five-dimensional character. There are not only the usual ingredients of the instructor, the students, and the subject matter at hand, but a source text and a target text as well.

To keep all these five elements under control simultaneously requires exceptional pedagogical aptitudes on the part of the instructor. Therefore, it is vitally important that there be a sense of cooperation in the classroom. The ideal situation would be for the instructor to be familiar with only the reading and the terminology of the assignment. The instructor's major effort should go into solving problems along with the students.

It is also a good idea to have students choose their own material on occasion. This gives them a feeling of being able to "test the teacher," which is good for their own confidence. Needless to say, instructors must be extremely solid in their knowledge--and possess strong egos--to be able to do this.

The following points seem particularly important to me:

- A translation course is not a lecture course, but a common effort involving students and instructor to find the best possible solution to the translation problems at hand.

- The instructor needs to be well enough prepared to be able to give *immediate feedback* to the students. In cases where some research is necessary, the feedback should be given, at the latest, during the following class session.

- The instructor must be well versed in the subject matter treated in the text material and must be able to introduce the students to the subject before any attempt at translation is made.

- Homework assignments are just as important--if not more important--than work done in class. Each student must receive a corrected translation back each week. The length of the assignment may vary, but it should be at least 500 words.

Corrections must be detailed and include explanations of the nature of the errors. The weakest points of the student's performance should be summarized, while at the same time the student should be encouraged to work hard to correct these areas. The instructor should also indicate how this can best be achieved.

Moreover, translation courses should include an introduction to available resources (dictionaries and reference materials) and their use. Students must be warned about the dangers of the incorrect use of dictionaries.

The whole process of translation must be taught: (1) preparing for a translation (in this

case it is a good idea to announce a subject one or two weeks ahead of time and ask students to prepare for it with glossaries of their own; (2) attacking a new text, i.e., *reading the entire text* before starting the translation; (3) establishing glossaries, keeping terminology card files, and improving vocabulary through the use of such resources as dictionaries of synonyms; and (4) going through the various phases leading to a perfect end product.

I have found it useful to go over homework assignments at the beginning of the class (assuming that the class lasts at least two hours) and then work on a new text before giving some indications for the next homework assignment. In this way, three different subjects or texts can be covered in a single class period. It is also a good idea to have a backup text ready for those days when the students simply do not relate to the text that was chosen originally.

During oral work in class, the instructor should avoid giving students any opportunity to do fast sight translations of the text at hand. This risk exists whenever students are also taking sight translation classes at the same time. Although the work in class is performed orally, the instructor must demand the purest written style.

Bilingual editions of texts are always an excellent means of instruction. Students can learn from bad as well as good translations. A homework assignment can consist, for example, of criticizing a translation. Students are always surprised--and reassured about the quality of their own work--to find errors in meaning even in published translations.

An enjoyable exercise in advanced translation classes can be the translation of humor: passages from "Asterix le Gaulois" (compare different language versions), or anecdotes, plays, situation comedies, cartoons, or comic strips.

Ascertaining the degree of difficulty to which students can reasonably be exposed in translation courses is a very delicate task. A careful balance must be maintained both within and across courses

in order to ensure the uniform progress of all students.

The difficulty of the course material should never go beyond the capacity of the students, *with one exception:* the first few weeks of the introductory semester.

It is important to present the beginning student with difficult material right from the outset (difficult in structure, not in language). The reason for this is that the beginner has to understand immediately that translation is going to be difficult and, more important, that it is a process that cannot be accomplished word-by-word.

The temptation is great, of course, to expose students to easy material in the beginning. However, particular attention must be paid to avoid giving them the opportunity to take the easy way out by translating word-for-word.

The instructor should put particular stress at this stage on breaking through the language barrier: the unnecessary linguistic and stylistic ballast that prevent the student from getting to the essential message. This barrier can consist of complicated structures, redundancies, repetitions, confusing conjoiners or modifiers, and so forth. It is the teacher's responsibility here to help the student to "peel" the unnecessary skin and to gradually reach the core. Once this has been accomplished, the process is reversed, and the student has to learn to reshape the core and to dress it in a new skin: the target language.

This process should not always follow the original sentence structure, but rather the original thought pattern. Students should be encouraged to adopt the sentence pattern that they feel most comfortable with in their target language.

It helps at this stage (and also later on in the training process) to break up classes into several working groups and to give each of them the same assignment. The results can then be compared and students can defend their translations.

Also, to create an especially warm atmosphere in the classroom, teachers can at times ask advanced students to criticize beginning students.

This usually has the added advantage of giving the advanced students some understanding of the problems that an instructor must cope with.

Interpretation

The teaching of interpretation is a very exacting activity, as it requires constant concentration on several processes that are going on in the classroom at the same time. It is, in fact, more strenuous than interpretation itself, where the interpreter needs to concentrate on only two processes simultaneously.

Sight translation. Sight translation is one of the basic ingredients of interpretation. The instructor should closely observe in class the skills of the student in the following areas:

- Public speaking quality, poise, presentation, and voice
- Speed
- Clarity and conciseness of the rendition

As a first step, students could prepare segments of speeches at home but not bring any notes with them. An almost perfect rendition should then be expected in class. This accustoms students to a quick pace from the outset, which then automatically carries over to those texts that are to be translated without preparation.

For work in class, I do not recommend giving the students time to read over the text before starting to translate. To be prepared for the unexpected is part and parcel of the interpreter's trade. At most, a brief introduction to the contents of the text can be given by the instructor, together with the necessary vocabulary.

On the more practical side, it is important to have students perform at a speaker's rostrum, so that they face the class. This will help them to

cope with stagefright and nervousness. Occasional videotaping of the students' performance is also helpful.

Consecutive interpretation. The teaching of consecutive interpretation is an art in itself--one that has made great strides only over the last ten years. I remember having learned this mode of interpretation without any introduction at all, being placed with advanced students from the outset and told to "sink or swim."

Two questions are often asked about consecutive interpretation:

- Why is it still taught, considering that approximately 99 percent of the interpreter's work is done in the simultaneous mode?

- When *is* consecutive interpretation used?

The answer to the first question is that consecutive interpretation constitutes the basis of all interpretation, as it develops the requisite analytical skills. Moreover, most employers first test interpreter candidates in consecutive interpretation, before even allowing them to perform simultaneous interpretation. It is still considered to be the best test for the interpretation skills as a whole.

As for the second question, consecutive interpretation is still used whenever a high degree of accuracy is required, e.g., in drafting committees, in legal negotiations, in high-level political talks between heads of state or government, and in after-dinner speeches; it is also used when participants in a meeting find it useful to have additional time for reflection during interpretation.

There is the additional possibility that simultaneous interpretation equipment can break down, especially in countries where spare parts and good maintenance are not the rule. When this occurs, all interpreters must be able to perform in the consecutive mode.

I usually recommend that students start their training in interpretation with some memory exercises. For instance, one student tells a short story that is repeated *in toto* by another student. The length and difficulty of the original stories are gradually increased until they take the form of short lectures on a variety of subjects.

At least until the middle of the first semester (the introductory course usually lasts one semester), absolutely no notes are taken. The students end up doing consecutive interpretation from English into English without any notes. The added difficulty of going from one language to another is only introduced during the following semester.

The memory exercises stress concentrating on the essential elements of the message. These exercises force the students to analyze the original message and to retain its key elements. They also are a good indication to the instructor of the way in which each student's mind functions.

During this phase all class material should be "natural," and formal written speeches or newspaper articles should be avoided. Gradually, the instructor asks the students to take some notes on what they have heard, but only from memory and only after the speaker has completely finished--not during the listening process. Only then should the instructor show the students how these notes can best be abbreviated; replaced by symbols, signs, and acronyms; and arranged on the paper so as to allow a speedy rendition.

It is of the utmost importance in these initial phases not to make any concessions as to the speed in which the oral messages are presented. This is not easy to do, as one tends to be merciful with beginners, especially when one remembers one's own introduction to interpretation. However, a slow delivery only encourages the students to follow the words, not the meaning. This introductory period is the most difficult of all and requires a great deal of experience in order to strike the right balance between corrections and encouragement. It is also during this stage that students should be asked to give several different versions

of the original presentation in order to increase their stylistic flexibility.

The phase when students first take notes on entire speeches is again a turning point in their development. They must be immediately corrected whenever they tend to take too many notes.

At this point, I would like to reply briefly to two additional questions that invariably arise during the introduction to consecutive interpretation:

- Should notes be taken in the source language or in the target language?

- Why not simply use shorthand?

(1) It does not matter in which language the notes are taken, since notes are only symbols that contain a message. Interpreters should retain *ideas* in their memory, not words. Words are only retained (and made note of) if they are of extreme importance and if they carry a message of their own. In fact, it is not uncommon for interpreters to start their consecutive interpretation in the same language as the original because they "forget" about the linguistic form of the original message. I myself often find that I take notes in English when I interpret between German and French, my two active languages, simply because I find many English words particularly useful as message-carrying symbols.

Quite naturally, beginning students will take most of their notes in the source language, not being used to the immediate transposition of ideas from one language to another. After having been exposed to simultaneous interpretation, they will then gradually take more and more notes in the target language.

It is important to stress that there can be no universal note-taking system. Just as there are many different styles of thinking and learning, there are as many different note-taking systems as there are interpreters. Therefore, we can only help the students develop their individual systems.

Never can such a system be imposed or learned by rote.

(2) There are several reasons why the use of shorthand should be formally discouraged for notes in consecutive interpretation:

- Shorthand notes must be deciphered at the moment of interpretation, thereby slowing down the whole process. A consecutive interpretation must *never* be longer than the original speech, but should, as a general rule, be a little shorter.

- Shorthand notes are automatically taken in the source language, without any effort to translate or analyze. This then leads to a word-for-word interpretation, which is precisely what must be avoided.

- The words as such are unimportant for consecutive interpreters. They must concentrate on the meaning alone, since this is the only way for them to be able to retain all the information contained in the original speech. The process of consecutive interpretation is basically the same as summing up the plot of a movie for some friends who did not get a chance to see it. The important difference, however, is that the interpreter also must fill in all the details.

- Shorthand notes would constitute an unnecessary burden on interpreters and would, in fact, make their work more complicated instead of facilitating it.

- The only time when some knowledge of shorthand can be useful is when symbols can be used to replace certain key words or when direct quotes are given from written documents. In this latter case, however, interpreters will always have the original text at their disposal, which

they can then sight translate without even taking notes.

Once the students have assimilated the technique of consecutive interpretation, the following exercise can be useful:

Ask the students to read their notes, starting with every single word or symbol that they have on paper. This makes them totally independent stylistically from the original structure of the message, increases their flexibility in style in their target language, and allows the instructor to test whether they have really understood the original message.

Whenever recordings are used as teaching material, or when students give their own presentations, it is important that instructors make their corrections on the basis of their own notes. This is the only way for them to be aware of the difficulties of the exercise. Moreover, this procedure has the advantage of keeping the students particularly alert, as they are always eager to catch their instructors missing one of their own mistakes or missing something in their notes that they themselves were able to remember.

I would like to end these brief observations on consecutive interpretation by reminding the reader that this is certainly the most rewarding form of interpretation. It has been developed into a genuine art form by many of its practitioners.

Simultaneous interpretation. The teaching of simultaneous interpretation is basically easy, once the students have mastered the processes involved in consecutive interpretation.

Although it sounds like a truism, it must be stated here that teaching a simultaneous interpretation class does not just consist of playing a tape in one language and listening to the students' interpretation while checking with a written version of the speech, if one is available. *Under no circumstances* should the instructor be locked into one single version of the interpretation and check it against a written translation. There are as

many good interpretations of one original as there are interpreters, just as Haifetz, Menuhin, and Oistrakh are able to give equally excellent, yet substantially different, interpretations of a violin concerto. Therefore, instructors must compare only the original with the interpretation, without ever considering their own interpretation.

In order to choose appropriate teaching materials and methods, the instructor must take into consideration the types of meetings where the simultaneous mode of interpretation is used:

- Discussions or negotiations, where speakers speak "off the cuff"
- Formal speeches, mostly of a general or political nature, which may or may not be read from a prepared manuscript
- Technical and scientific papers, which are almost always read
- Lectures, which are normally prepared in writing

Students must be prepared for all these different types of situations.

Here again, an obvious observation might seem in order--one that is nevertheless frequently overlooked: a simultaneous class must be *spent in the booth* that will be the interpreter's working environment for at least six hours every day. Since this is not a normal environment for most people, students must gradually be made to feel comfortable in these surroundings.

Just as pilots must react in a plane's cockpit, interpreters must develop certain automatic reflexes when handling their equipment. Following are some important rules that the student must learn immediately:

- Always make sure that the microphone is turned *on* while interpreting, and *off* during private conversations or remarks.

- Always leave one ear uncovered, so that you can hear your voice. Nonobservance of this rule can lead to too much amplification and eventually to hearing damage and an unnecessarily tired voice by the end of a long working day.

- Always control your voice volume so that it feels comfortable and sounds pleasant to the listener, who is the only "raison d'être" of any interpretation.

- Always keep a proper distance from the microphone and *maintain* this distance. A frequent change in this distance forces listeners to adjust their volume continuously and distracts them from the business at hand, which is *not* listening to the interpretation.

- Always use the "Cough" or "Interrupt" buttons and *NOT* the microphone switch when coughing or clearing your throat. The reason for this is that the former "bridges" the floor channel sound, whereas the latter, when in the "Off" position, feeds the original sound, instead of the interpretation, into the listeners' ears. It is highly unpleasant for delegates to have the sound of the interpretation constantly interrupted by bits and pieces of original speech.

- Always make sure that you are switched to the outgoing channel that corresponds to your language, as indicated in the program or the meeting room. This is especially important when two different languages are coming from the same booth in bilingual conferences and the interpreter, not the technician, selects the outgoing channel.

- Always test your equipment, especially the "Cough" buttons.

- Always test the "relais." This is the interpreter's means of listening to another interpreter who works from a language unknown to the former.

Introductory Exercises

Several techniques can be used to teach simultaneous interpretation. All these complement each other and should be used at one point or another during the course.

After they feel reasonably comfortable with their working environment, future interpreters need to be introduced to the process of listening and speaking at the same time. Although this mode of interpreting is called "simultaneous," there is a slight time lag between what interpreters hear and what they say. This time lag can be as long as a full sentence, if the source language is very different structurally from the target language.

This can actually be quite a traumatic experience for beginning students, and instructors need to take great care to be very encouraging at this point. They should talk about their own early experiences in the booth. At the same time, they should keep the class moving along and not let the students get bored, as speed is the essence of all interpretation.

As a first exercise, students should simply listen to the instructor through their earphones.

In the next step, "shadowing," students are asked to repeat what they hear--simultaneously and in the same language. This exercise, however, must not be carried on for too long, as it consists of a word-for-word repetition, which is precisely what we expect the accomplished interpreter to avoid.

As soon as possible, therefore, students must be asked to provide summaries--first of sentences

and then of whole paragraphs. At this point, the instructor normally still improvises most of the material or asks students to contribute short speeches themselves.

Shortly afterward, students should listen to recordings of real-life speeches and then be asked to summarize them. Speeches that are difficult to understand (foreign accents, high speed, unclear logic, etc.) can be used at this stage. Also, series of numbers should be introduced at this time, as many students have problems memorizing long numbers.

One of the most important aptitudes for simultaneous interpreters is the ability to anticipate. Students should therefore be requested to finish sentences that were not completed by the instructor. Later on, they must be required to finish whole paragraphs on their own.

After all these exercises have been carried out for one full semester (assuming that each class period is of one hour's duration), the students can then be exposed to a bilingual situation. If the introductory exercises have been properly carried out, with constant feedback from the instructor and considerable guided practice (including recordings to check voice and pace), students should now start to make rapid progress.

Advanced Exercises

Neither sight translation nor consecutive interpretation should be dropped when students pass on to the simultaneous mode. All three activities are indispensable and must be continued concurrently until the end of the training period.

In order to be able to provide constant feedback, the instructor must always keep in mind the elements of a good simultaneous interpretation: the rendition should sound effortless; it should be presented in a pleasant, confidence-inspiring voice; it should be rigorously accurate in meaning and as complete as possible; and it should include all the

innuendos, inflections, nuances, and "atmosphere" of the original speech.

Breathing techniques normally present no problems for the average student. However, when under pressure (for example, when students know that they are being listened to or when they are required to speak very rapidly), some students develop breathing difficulties. The instructor should draw the students' attention to this immediately in order to prevent them from developing bad habits that cannot be corrected later on.

Teachers should always indicate which student they are listening to so that the students can get used to the pressure of being "on the spot." This pressure is a fact of our professional life, and students must learn to cope with it at an early stage in their training.

Incidentally, not all students will be naturally rapid speakers. The best way for them to acquire an adequate speaking speed is to read difficult technical material *aloud* at high speed, including technical terminology that is difficult to pronounce, e.g., chemical compounds.

For the more advanced students, the course can be conducted in one or more of the following ways. For the sake of variety, all these methods should be used at one time or another.

- The instructor reads a speech and listens to one interpretation at the same time. This should pose no problem for a professional interpreter.

- The instructor improvises a speech and listens to the student's interpretation at the same time. This method is extremely difficult to keep up over a long period.

- The students interpret a speech that has been recorded on tape or cassette.

- The students interpret an exposé presented by a fellow student or a guest speaker.

- The whole group organizes a discussion on a prepared subject.

As nothing replaces reality in the classroom, regular mock conferences or interpretation seminars should be organized at least twice each semester. Several languages should be used during these conferences, and students should be required to perform both consecutive and simultaneous interpretations.

One last remark: as in consecutive interpretation and sight translation, it is important that students be regularly exposed to performances of professional quality, so that they have a goal to strive for. In addition to demonstrations by the professor, tape recordings of good and bad interpretations can be used. It has been my experience that colleagues always readily oblige when asked for permission to be recorded during their work.

CHAPTER 6: TESTING

TRANSLATION

Testing is less important in the case of translation than it is in interpretation. In my opinion, homework assignments with extensive corrections are more conducive to the learning process than testing is. However, translators are generally under constant pressure, due to very tight deadlines imposed by clients. Therefore, they must also be tested at the end of their training period under pressure conditions. Staff translators in the United Nations are expected to translate an average of eight pages per day. However, freelance translators will find it necessary to double this daily output.

After the first year, students should be able to translate correctly about 300 words per hour, provided that the text does not require too much research or use of a dictionary. Professionals have disagreed for a long time on whether or not to allow the use of dictionaries during exams or tests. Nowadays, most potential employers do permit the use of dictionaries when they test new translators. This makes a lot of sense, as this is the normal working situation for the translator. Moreover, it is important that translators demonstrate their skills in using dictionaries, which more often than not makes their work even more complicated.

For final exams, students should be expected to translate about 1000 words in three hours. A final exam should accomplish the following:

- Test the student's knowledge of general and technical terminology
- Test the student's aptitude to work rapidly, yet correctly, under time constraints
- Test the student's skill in using dictionaries
- Test the student's general resourcefulness in cases in which the dictionary is of no help
- Test the student's general readiness to enter the job market
- Prepare the student for future tests with potential employers

Grading

It seems important to make some basic observations on how to grade translations. There is, of course, no generally applicable recipe, but certain basic rules should be adhered to.

First and foremost, grading should be based on precise criteria, including meaning, accuracy, style, terminology, and grammar. The grader must be entirely familiar with the text and its terminology. When grading, just as in class, the instructor must under no circumstances compare the student's product with a ready-made translation, as this would tend to bias the grade.

Some instructors read all the translations before making any corrections in order to get an overall view of the quality of the work of the students. This helps to ensure a fair grading standard. Corrections must include detailed comments on the student's performance, including the correct version of improperly translated passages.

Under no circumstances should more than two meaning errors be allowed, regardless of the

difficulty of the text (provided, of course, that the text material is adapted to the student's level). However, it is not that simple to define a meaning error. Grading becomes particularly difficult in the "gray zones." Should a wrongly translated word, for instance, be counted as a meaning error if it changes the meaning, or should it just count as an error in terminology?

At the Monterey Institute of International Studies we are working on precise definitions and rating scales of several categories of errors. We hope to publish the results in the near future.

In any event, a maximum number of acceptable errors should be set beforehand, so that grading is uniform for all students. If several students have the same number of mistakes, the style will make the difference in the final grade.

One word on grading exams in the students' foreign languages: I am again taking it for granted that these exercises are required for purely academic purposes and that it is made quite clear to students that they should never translate professionally into their foreign languages. The only possible exception might be commercial correspondence, which is highly repetitive in character and does not require great language skill. The whole art of translation is difficult enough when working in one's own language, and attempts to translate into foreign languages will always be of poor quality, unless the translator has lived for many years in the country of the target language.

At least two graders should grade final exams, for the students' professional careers can be at stake. In cases of a tie (one fail, one pass), a third grader should be consulted.

Graders need not necessarily be faculty members. In fact, it is a good idea to use outside professionals, especially when not all the instructors are professional translators. This is also a way to ensure that students meet the standards required by the profession.

In programs that offer several foreign languages, a uniform grading policy among all languages is extremely important. It makes absolutely

no sense to be more lenient in so-called "difficult" languages, such as German or Russian, as the requirements in those languages will be strictly identical to those for all other languages.

Also, no consideration should be given to the fact that a student is working in a second or third foreign language. The person who reads a translation cannot be expected to make allowances for the translator's language background.

INTERPRETATION

Interpretation exams are generally graded on the basis of the same criteria as translation exams, except that voice, speed, presentation, and "credibility" of the performance are also evaluated.

Consecutive Interpretation

In the early stages of consecutive interpretation, the students' note-taking technique should be evaluated in addition to the above criteria. No consecutive test should last any less than three minutes. The text should be read or spoken at a normal speed, as a slow pace does not really help students. Instead, it induces them to take too many notes, which are usually badly structured and difficult to read back.

In a final exam, no test should be longer than ten minutes. Normally, speakers interrupt after about four to five minutes to allow time for the interpretation. Consecutive interpretations of more than ten minutes' duration are extremely rare. It is most important that all examiners take notes themselves, on which to base their evaluations, as some of the students' difficulties may otherwise escape them.

Although the student interpreter's memory is to be tested, a relatively short test can give a

good indication of the candidate's skill in this mode of interpretation. Tests in international organizations rarely last more than five minutes.

For final professional exams, candidates should be required to do at least two interpretations into their native language from each of their foreign languages, and two from their native language into their first foreign language.

Unlike translators, interpreters may be required to work consecutively *but never simultaneously* into their first foreign language. Also, as interpretation is an oral skill, one expects a conference interpreter to be fluent in several foreign languages.

The tests into the foreign language should be graded on the basis of clarity, completeness, and grammatical correctness. The accent may be foreign, but it should be understandable to a native speaker without special effort.

One very important quality to look for in examining an interpreter is the candidate's aptitude to sound convincing, especially under difficult conditions. However, the overriding criterion must always be the accuracy of meaning. A candidate who gives what may sound like a very convincing or even brilliant interpretation with more than one meaning error *must fail* the exam.

Amazingly enough, some instructors have been known to allow candidates to look over their consecutive notes before starting their interpretation. This is a serious error. The consecutive interpretation must be attacked immediately after the speaker has finished. Consecutive interpretation is already time consuming enough in a meeting and tends to irritate participants toward the end of a day. Interpreters must make a strict effort to keep the time they need to an absolute minimum.

A consecutive interpretation, therefore, must *never* be longer than the original. It should, if at all possible, be shorter, not because the interpreter should give a summary, but because he or she is a professional in the art of oral communication, which speakers seldom are. On very rare occasions, especially when time is of the essence, the

chairman of a meeting might ask the interpreter to give only a summary of the original remarks.

How complete should a consecutive interpretation be? The rule is basically simple: the interpretation must contain everything that is necessary to the understanding of the original message that the speaker intended to communicate, including all nonverbal content.

Simultaneous Interpretation

Exams in simultaneous interpretation should consist of two parts: a rendition of an improvised exposé and an interpretation of a more technical paper, the written text of which has been given to the student approximately fifteen to twenty minutes before the test to allow for preparation. This is the normal procedure in all scientific meetings, and the student must be able to listen, read, and interpret at the same time.

Among the criteria of evaluation in exams of simultaneous interpretation, in addition to those already mentioned in the section on consecutive interpretation, are technique, anticipation, speed, and pleasantness of voice.

The simultaneous interpreter must never sound boring when interpreting a slow speaker, or hurried and incoherent when interpreting a very fast speaker. However, a final exam should not be a speed contest, as candidates tend in any case to do less well under exam conditions. The pressure should be that normally encountered in a meeting, but not artificially high.

Some interpreters' schools do not admit candidates to the simultaneous interpretation exams unless they have passed the consecutive interpretation section. Although I agree that no one should enter the profession without having passed both exams, I feel that students should be allowed to take both sections and only have to repeat those parts that they did not pass.

Incidentally, students should not get more than two chances to take any interpreters' exam. If they are not fully prepared for the exams, they should be discouraged from taking them. If they had a bad day during their first attempt, they deserve a second chance. If they cannot handle the exam pressure the second time, they are definitely not ready to enter the profession.

An effort should be made to have professional observers present, particularly for interpreters' exams. Also, it gives the exams a particular "panache" if they are open to the public. A real conference interpreter should be stimulated by a large crowd and, like an actor, should perform better.

CHAPTER 7: CAREER OPTIONS AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES

It must be stated emphatically from the outset of this chapter that *only the very best* candidates will be able to find career employment in translation and interpretation.

It is difficult to assess how many people are currently employed as translators and interpreters, as not all of them belong to professional organizations. Moreover, the number of people who work as translators less than full time is enormously high.

The International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) numbers 1600 members in about 40 countries. It is recognized as the official negotiating partner with the UN and all its specialized agencies, the European organizations, and most European government agencies. The best known professional associations in the U.S. are the American Association of Language Specialists (TAALS) and the American Translators Association (ATA).

Although there still is a great need for well-qualified translators and interpreters, there are many unqualified people who call themselves professionals, and it is difficult for potential employers to screen candidates. Especially in the case of translators, there is a need for more rigid professional standards so that potential clients can immediately judge the abilities of applicants from their credentials. In the meantime, people who want to enter the two fields will have to prove themselves and build up their own clientele, just as newly established physicians, architects, or attorneys are obliged to do.

Most professional translators and interpreters start out by freelancing before they find permanent

employment. Translators, however, tend to find permanent positions more often than interpreters do. Most interpreters tend to remain freelancers.

The most difficult period for new graduates is the time immediately following the completion of their studies. Most employers are hesitant to give a beginner a chance; on the other hand, beginners must establish their credentials. Unless graduates have a language combination for which there is a high demand, they should expect a waiting period of at least one year before they are able to earn a living through interpretation or translation. Furthermore, access to the profession is now open almost exclusively to candidates with a university degree and graduate training at a professionally recognized school, of which there are only three in the United States at present: the Monterey Institute of International Studies (translation and interpretation), Georgetown University (translation and interpretation), and State University of New York at Binghamton (translation only).

In many other professions, mediocrity can remain undetected for relatively long periods. In our field, however, the effect can be immediate: a corporation can lose a contract, an individual can misunderstand directions given in an operating manual for a machine or an appliance, a contract can be misinterpreted and give rise to lawsuits, discussions in a meeting can be unnecessarily prolonged because of a faulty interpretation, results of a vote can be incorrectly reported in the press, etc. In brief, this leads to an interruption of the communication process between people or groups of people--a process that we are expected to help make possible, not make more difficult. If translation and interpretation are not *excellent*, they have not achieved their principal purpose.

SOURCES OF EMPLOYMENT

Finding employment depends on the candidate's language combination. This aspect is so vital that training programs must ascertain which combinations are most in demand at any given time before deciding what languages to offer.

Both translation and interpretation are fields with limited employment possibilities, but these change constantly. Lately, for example, there seems to be an increased demand for people with a knowledge of Portuguese.

The *United Nations* has six official languages: English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, and Arabic. Candidates must possess French and English to enter, regardless of their other languages. Some of the specialized agencies of the UN use other languages at times. The International Labor Organization in Geneva, for example, uses German but no Chinese.

The *European Communities* in Brussels, the single largest employer in the world of both translators and conference interpreters, uses the following languages: English, French, German, Dutch, Italian, Danish, and Greek. It is expected that Spanish and Portuguese will be added as soon as these two countries are admitted to the organization. However, the EC hires only citizens of one of the member countries as permanent personnel. (This rule does not apply to freelancers.)

Other international, intergovernmental *organizations* in the United States that employ translators and interpreters are the Organization of American States, the Panamerican Health Organization, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and INTELSAT (International Telecommunication Satellite Consortium).

Among *American government agencies*, the Department of State, the International Communication Agency, the Library of Congress, and the Central Intelligence Agency (with several subagencies, such as the Joint Publication and Research Service) are the largest employers of language personnel.

In *private industry*, language personnel are needed on a more sporadic basis, depending on whether or not business conditions are favorable with certain foreign countries. For this reason, it is difficult to survey the translation needs of the American corporate world, which is not only huge, but also undergoes constant changes. Most private corporations farm out their language work; very few have permanent in-house translators or interpreters.

Translation agencies are probably the beginner's best bet to get started in the profession. The Yellow Pages should provide useful information. However, future professionals must make sure that they deal only with agencies that enjoy an excellent reputation in their field. Getting involved with agencies that do not offer work of the highest quality might jeopardize their future career.

A word of warning is in order at this point: beginners must always be aware of their value to an agency and must not let employers take advantage of them. They should be paid decently and make sure that the agency's fee is not out of line. They should also guard against the occasional unethical practice of some agencies of selling their "test" translations directly to clients.

The question of *job placement* always arises among students in training programs. Training programs *do not offer professional placement*. A training program can help graduates contact potential employers, but actual placement in jobs is extremely rare. This is another reason why translation and interpretation should only be taught by professionals, who have the necessary contacts to help students find jobs.

Location is obviously an important consideration. Anyone who intends to make the investment necessary to become a professional translator or interpreter and, for some reason, does not wish to or cannot leave his or her immediate area of residence, should first explore the job opportunities in that area very thoroughly. Generally speaking, working as a freelancer involves a great deal of mobility. One has to be ready to move to where the

work is being offered. In the case of freelance conference interpreters, this means a great deal of traveling. This is probably one of the few truly international professions in the world. Freelance conference interpreters are constantly traveling, which can be quite disruptive to family life. This must also be taken into consideration when making a career decision.

A question that is often asked is, "Can one be *both* a translator and an interpreter?" As stated earlier, no translator can interpret without having had proper training. Although both professions are language related, they are two distinct professions. Interpreters, on the other hand, are normally qualified to do translations, especially if translation was part of their training, which is usually the case. In fact, all interpreters should expect to have to survive on translation work for a while, until they can earn a decent living through interpretation alone.

In the U.S., freelance conference interpreters usually work a maximum of 100 days per year. This figure is considerably lower on the West Coast.

Many graduates from training programs even have to accept jobs in totally unrelated fields for a while, in order to survive and pay back student loans. In these cases it is very important that they not lose the professional skills that have been so painfully acquired.

Internships are normally not available, although there are two exceptions for conference interpreters:

The *European Communities* has its own training program. The admission requirements are at least a Master's degree in a field *other* than languages and the passing of a highly selective aptitude test. If accepted, candidates receive a salary during the training period and are then integrated into the ranks of staff interpreters upon passing another test (usually after six months).

The *United Nations*, both in Geneva and in New York, also offers a six-month training program for conference interpreters, but only for candidates with language combinations for which there is an

opening. This is at present the case for candidates with Spanish as a native language. All applicants must have been previously trained in a university translation and interpretation program.

Interpreters who become international civil servants eventually earn quite handsome salaries, but these positions are rare and highly coveted. Only the very best will be accepted.

One field that offers increasing job opportunities is that of *court interpreting*. Testing procedures have been federally regulated for federal courts, as well as by a number of states, for state, county, and municipal courts. Information on this career is available from the state court system or the local court interpreters' associations.

In summary, persons interested in career opportunities in translation and interpretation should explore the following sources:

- University training programs
- Professional associations
- Translation agencies
- International organizations
- Government agencies
- Private corporations engaged in international trade
- Foreign chambers of commerce

Professional associations should be contacted for information on rates and fees.

I would like to point out in closing this chapter that we seem to be in a period of transition. On the one hand, the demand for language personnel is increasing; on the other hand, there seems to be an oversupply of candidates. However, at least one-third of the translators and interpreters who are now employed will drop out of the professional ranks over the next ten years or so. So, although the job market is extremely tight right now, our profession appears to have a good future, even for newcomers, who will eventually replace those who are presently engaged in the profession.

CHAPTER 8: PROFESSIONAL ETHICS AND CODE OF CONDUCT

RULES OF CONDUCT

The professional associations publish their own codes of conduct, but I would like to stress some of the most important professional rules that apply to both translators and interpreters.

Maintain Professional Confidence

With the exception of work done for government agencies or the courts, translators and interpreters are generally not sworn to professional secrecy. Nonetheless--and this is extremely important for the image of the profession--one *does not* discuss or volunteer information about sensitive material that one has had access to during the performance of one's professional work. Even apparently harmless material might be highly sensitive in some quarters, without the translator or interpreter's even being aware of it.

Only Accept Assignments for Which You Are Qualified

This rule is just as important as the first one and places the responsibility on language personnel, especially the beginner, of finding out about the exact character of an assignment before accepting.

When in doubt, professionals should consult colleagues who have worked in the same field or with the same client in the past. Graduates from training programs should ask their former teachers when unsure about accepting an assignment.

I must dissipate a myth here: technical work is not necessarily more difficult than work of a more general character. The beginner should not automatically reject technical assignments as being too difficult to handle, *provided that* he or she is given ample time and documentation for preparation. In fact, beginners will sometimes find that they are more thoroughly prepared than some oldtimers.

The most difficult material tends to be that which involves a high degree of accuracy in the target language and many nuances to catch in the source language. Terminology can always be looked up in a reference book or found through consultation with the author or an expert in the field, whereas the complete understanding of a foreign language takes a lifetime.

Always Go through Channels

For the translator this means consulting the client directly (with the previous approval of the translation agency, if one is involved). Clients are naturally eager at times to establish direct contact with the translator, in order to bypass the agency's fee. In the end, the translator will be more respected for being honest, even if it involves having to argue with a particularly insistent client.

For the interpreter, this means first contacting the chief interpreter of the meeting, and then the client if there are any problems to be solved.

Never try to establish contact with a client over the head of the person who has recruited the team. If this happens, it can mean the end of a professional career, as most interpreting assignments are channeled through colleagues who act as consulting interpreters.

Respect the Rules

When rules are published by professional associations, they must be observed. In cases where membership in these associations is not open to beginners, they should still make the effort to keep themselves informed about these rules, as it will increase their chances of becoming a member later on.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Members of our two professions carry a heavy responsibility, which I see as consisting of seven aspects:

(1) The responsibility *toward the reader or the listener*. A good translation and a good interpretation should both read and sound like originals. The obvious goal in this whole process of intercultural communication is to make the reader or listener forget that an intermediary was involved. The highest compliment that can be paid to an interpreter, for instance, is when a delegate starts insulting him or her instead of the original speaker. Professionals must be able to efface themselves and never appear as more than they really are: go-betweens.

(2) The responsibility *toward the client*. The client is not necessarily the same person as the reader/listener. Although clients are normally not directly concerned with the results of our work, it is they who pay. And if complaints do reach the client, it is usually too late to do something to correct them.

(3) The responsibility *toward the author or the speaker*. The main goal here is to be sure that the intentions expressed in the original message are clearly understood by the reader/listener. In the case of translations, this requires careful checking with the author whenever this is possible.

(4) The responsibility *toward the language*. This aspect of their responsibility is too often overlooked by many translators and interpreters. They are the guardians of their language, in the sense that many people read what they write and listen to what they say. Too many professionals treat their language just as a working tool, without love or respect, and tend to develop a stereotyped vocabulary and style. Those who constantly work with the same subject matter must make a special effort to read good literature regularly. Interpreters should go back to written translations in order to avoid sounding like an official document when they interpret.

(5) The responsibility *toward one's colleagues*. This is almost self-evident, but it must be stressed, since both our professions enjoy a particularly cordial climate. Each time freelance translators or interpreters negotiate with a client, they set a precedent for their colleagues. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that they maintain a professional attitude under all circumstances, good *and* bad.

For interpreters in particular, whose working conditions are especially stressful, a cooperative working spirit is essential. Being helpful in the interpreters' booth with notes, water, or even by just providing an unobtrusive yet efficient presence, does much to make a colleague feel comfortable and to assure high-quality work for the whole team.

(6) The responsibility *toward oneself*. In our two professions there is a strong temptation to overwork by accepting too many assignments at one time. Managing one's own resources and knowing one's limitations, both in quality and in quantity, contribute to a long and satisfying professional career. Even a freelancer must take a rest and vacation at regular intervals, especially after heavy working periods, although it means not being paid during this time. This is an inherent risk for any freelancer or self-employed person.

(7) The responsibility *toward the profession as a whole*. Translators and interpreters must never forget that with each assignment they are

representing the entire profession. The best way to assure a good reputation for these two professions, which enjoy no legal protection, is to set only the highest standards of quality. Employers often generalize from one bad experience and will not hire any interpreters or translators.

It should be made clear to employers that no translations should be delivered with unsolved problems because the author or an expert could not be contacted as a result of the reticence of the agency to let the translator communicate directly.

Likewise, no interpreting assignment must be accepted unless the interpreter has the guarantee that he or she will be provided with ample preparatory material. When written papers are read, the interpreter must receive advance copies.

And, most important, interpreters must be sure of the quality of the sound equipment they will be using for simultaneous interpretation. They must not be afraid to ask to have a say in the client's choice of the equipment. Instances where interpreters have to refuse to work with bad equipment once the meeting has started are always unpleasant, and one should try and avoid these by making sure that the client provides only outstanding equipment, even if it is a little more expensive to rent.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to offer some advice to prospective students.

Do not rush your training! Take as much time as you can. Learn as much as you possibly can about human nature in general and the culture of those whose languages you are studying in particular.

You will be dealing with written and spoken ideas for the rest of your life. Even with an outstanding professional preparation, you will fail in your endeavors if you have not developed the degree of maturity that is obligatory for effective communication.

If you do not have a genuine love for your own language as well as for foreign languages and cultures, you should not attempt to become a translator or interpreter.

These professions require a great deal of personal devotion and sacrifice. They are definitely not a means to acquire wealth. At times, they can be quite frustrating and even uninteresting, especially if the source material is boring, which it well may be. But you will often find that even material that might seem boring at first sight presents the true professional with a genuine linguistic challenge.

Many people feel that translation and interpretation are good fields to work in at the beginning and at the end of their professional careers. There is a certain truth to this, although most professionals nowadays remain in these fields throughout their entire careers.

Translation and interpretation are activities that leave considerable free time to engage in other

intellectual occupations, which are usually related to the great variety of subjects that one encounters during one's professional life. Many translators and interpreters have parallel careers in teaching, business, writing, and editing.

I hope that with these guidelines I have been able to accomplish the following:

- *Translate* some of the often mysterious ideas that people have about these two professions into more realistic concepts
- *Interpret* what the readers hoped to find in this publication
- *Raise the degree of respect* for both professions.

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